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HOW TO

IDENTIFY AND CONTROL

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THE WALNUT CATERPILLAR



US North Central Forest Experiment Station
Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

HOW TO IDENTIFY AND CONTROL THE WALNUT CATERPILLAR

The walnut caterpillar (*Datana integerrima*, Grote and Robinson) is a serious pest of black walnut. It also attacks pecan, hickory, and butternut. The insect occurs throughout eastern United States.



Adult moths are active during May and July in the central and southern States and April through September in the South. The adult is tan with some dark brown behind the head and on the forewings. The female deposits 300 or more eggs in a cluster on the under side of a leaf.



Larvae emerge about 9 days after the eggs are deposited. Larvae pass through five stages (or instars), each stage taking about 5 days. They feed on the foliage of the trees and cause damage ranging from skeletonization of the leaves during the first instar through complete defoliation of the tree in the fifth or last instar. After feeding, the larvae drop from the tree and enter the soil where they pupate and overwinter.

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IDENTIFICATION

Look for:

Egg clusters, pale green to light blue-gray (depending on age) with white caps on under side of walnut leaves in spring.



Hairy larvae, ranging in color from light green, through red-brown and white, to black and white, depending on the stage of development (instar) the insect is in.

Skeletonized leaves in late spring; completely defoliated twigs or limbs; during summer — especially on the lower part of the crown.



CONTROL

For small trees in small plantations, the best control is to remove the egg clusters and colonies of larvae by clipping off and destroying infested twigs. The earlier in the season this is done the better, because infestations tend to begin on the lower limbs of the trees and migrate upward. Larvae that are molting on the trunk or lower branches can also be removed and destroyed.



For large trees and large plantations, where it is impractical to remove eggs and larvae, chemical control may be necessary. Insecticides should be sprayed on the foliage as soon as larvae appear. Malathion (Cythion), carbaryl (Sevin), and azinphosmethyl (Guthion) are registered for insect control on walnut. (Mention of trade names does not imply endorsement by the Forest Service.) Read the label carefully for dilution rate and methods of application. Contact your County Extension Entomologist for further information.

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